

## BUBO MAXIMUS, *Sibb.*

### Eagle Owl.

- Bubo maximus* (Sibb.), Flem. Hist. Brit. Anim., p. 57.  
*Strix bubo*, Linn. Faun. Suec., p. 24.  
*Bubo*, *Bubo Italicus* et *B. Laponicus*, Briss. Orn., tom. i. pp. 447, 482, 486.  
— *nudipes*, Daud. Traité d'Orn., tom. ii. p. 209?  
— *Atheniensis*, Daud. ib., p. 209.  
— *albus*, Daud. ib., p. 210.  
— *microcephalus*, Steph. Cont. of Shaw's Gen. Zool., vol. xiii. pt. 11. p. 55.  
— *Europæus*, Less. Traité d'Orn., p. 115; Atlas, pl. 17. fig. 1.  
— *Germanicus*, Brehm, Vög. Deutschl., tom. i. p. 119.  
— *septentrionalis*, Brehm, ib., p. 120, pl. 9. fig. 1.  
*Asio bubo*, Swains. Class. of Birds, vol. ii. p. 217.  
*Otus bubo*, Schleg. Rev. Crit. des Ois. d'Eur., p. 13.

If I were to indulge in a poetic vein while writing the history of this noble species, which stands at the head of all the European Owls, I might speak of its selection as the emblem of all that is wise and learned, or I might take up another strain and write upon its midnight voice, or upon its presence being regarded as an omen of death and other evil forebodings; but I will let such fancies and fallacies stand for what they are worth and write a page on its history—not that I have any additional information to communicate respecting its natural habits and economy.

The Great Horned or Eagle Owl, which is unquestionably the largest and finest species of the birds for which the generic term of *Bubo* is now employed, is a native of the northern regions of the Old World, and is represented in the New by the *Bubo Virginianus*. The two species bear a very general resemblance to each other, but each possesses well-defined characters by which they may be distinguished. The regions of the Old World in which the present bird dwells are the forest- or mountain-districts of Central Europe, Norway, Sweden, Russia, and Siberia, as far as the Amoor land. In England, Ireland, and Scotland it is extremely scarce, and its presence, when it does occur therein, must be regarded as purely accidental. In fact, should the traveller consider that if he made a journey to the European continent, whether it be to Norway or Switzerland, he would meet with this noble bird, and see its great fiery eyes blazing from the branch of a forest-tree, or its egrets standing erect in the sky-line when surmounting a rock, or hear its hollow hooting from a gully, he would probably be disappointed; for nowhere is the bird abundant, and it is only in some favoured locality, far from the abode of man, that it takes up its quarters for the purpose of breeding. The areas over which the mated pairs range must be of considerable extent, and the amount of food necessary for their existence commensurately great. I should suppose that there is no one of my readers who has not seen this bird in a state of captivity; for there are not many parts of England, from the renowned Castle of Arundel in the south to the successful rearing in cages of my friend Edward Fountaine, Esq., of Easton near Norwich, in the north, where living examples may not be seen, and nowhere to greater advantage than in the fine Menagerie of the Zoological Society in the Regent's Park.

The food of this powerful Owl consists of fawns, hares, grouse, and other birds, which are pounced upon on the ground and seized with its feet, the head being rarely advanced towards the prey until its struggles are over.

By far the best account of the nest and eggs of the Eagle Owl is that furnished to Mr. Hewitson by the late Mr. John Wolley, and published in the third edition of his work on the 'Eggs of British Birds;' and I am sure I shall be held excused for copying his graphic description instead of attempting to describe what I have not seen myself.

After expressing the great difficulty of "hunting up the ornithological population of such a country" as Norway, where the birds are few and the area over which they are scattered vast and almost inaccessible, he writes—"First, I was determined to find a nest of *Strix bubo*; many expeditions of some miles, and several days lost, have resulted in the finding of a single nest with two young ones and an egg just hatching, and this after inquiries at every place I have been to. It was on the 20th of May, and after climbing to the mysterious cave of Skulberg, that our road lay under a steep mountain-side broken up into crags and ledges of the character which is usually so attractive to birds of prey. There was a little village at the foot; and an old man pointed out the direction from which the hootings were to be heard every evening. Whilst I was listening to the consultation and taking a survey with my glass, an Osprey flew along the edge of the cliff, at a great height above us, and, mellowed in the distance, there came a full